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ABSTRACT

During a kayaking expedition in 1983, the author was sucked into an underwater tunnel in Mexico's Rio Urique. He miraculously emerged unharmed, but this near-death experience awakened in him a primal awareness that had been coddled to sleep by his so-called civilized perceptions. He gained intuitive insights from this awakening that enabled him to communicate "heart-to-heart" with wild horses, trauma victims, and troubled teenagers. Fourteen years later he returned to Mexico and stayed with the Raramuri Indians, learning more about this primal awareness from a 100-year-old shaman. These experiences helped him develop a model of how the human mind learns. The model is represented by the mnemonic CAT-FAWN--Concentration Activated Transformation, which is activated by Fear, Authority, Words, and Nature. The concepts represented by the CAT-FAWN connection offer Western minds a paradigm for understanding subjective experience, rather than for measuring objective reality. They symbolize the associations that have patterned the thinking styles of many indigenous people, especially Native Americans. Primal people offer a living model for rediscovering our own innate primal awareness. A partnership between Western and indigenous thinking can bring the natural world back into our lives and help us regain our primal awareness. Indigenous educational theories can bring balance to learning, which now places too much emphasis on conformity to authority, words, and fear. (Contains 178 references, notes, a glossary, an index, and photographs.) (TD)

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